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ABSTRACT

The Elementary Certification Program at Duke University, the first program to be approved under North Carolina's innovative alternative certification route, is a small but significant step toward the improvement of teacher education. This innovative program offers prospective early childhood teachers with liberal arts backgrounds an intensive field-based teacher preparation program. The program was designed and conducted in a collaborative effort between master teachers in a local school system and Duke's teacher preparation program. The program incorporates an intensive semester of internship in a model school setting. The internship is designed along the medical, or clinical, training model. Interns are given the opportunity to conduct research on a special topic of interest in collaboration with a professor of their choice. The program admits a maximum of 10 teachers a year. (Courses involved in the internship are listed in Figure 1.) (RH)

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TRYING A NEW WAY

Innovative Teacher Certification Program for Teachers of Young Children - Duke University

Mary E. Mayesky, Ph.D.

The word "innovation" in teacher preparation programs has become so over-used in the current educational reform movement to the extent that the word itself has, ironically, become almost hackneyed. Innumerable "innovations" in improving teacher education have fallen by the wayside, witnessed by hundreds of "innovative" teacher "training" manuals, videos, and books gathering dust---unused on shelves all over the country.

Obviously, with a full realization of this situation, I feel more than a bit of trepidation in being so bold as to describe in the following pages yet another innovative teacher education program. However, after a careful review of the current status of teacher preparation programs in the United States, it appears that the Duke Elementary Certification Program does, in effect, prepare teachers of young children in an innovative manner.[1]

The following article presents the basic information on Duke University's innovative teacher preparation program for teachers of young children, quite simply--the why, what, who, where, and when of its being. This information is presented in the hope that it may provide assistance and most of all encouragement for others involved in teacher preparation to consider a new approach to the preparation of teachers of young children.

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[1]A comprehensive bibliography on innovative teacher preparation programs in the United States, 1985-1990, was sponsored by funds from the Duke University Research Council, 1989-90. For a copy of this bibliography, write Dr. Mary E. Mayesky, 213 West Duke Bldg., Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

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WHY--an innovative program?

On both the national and the state levels, the need to try different approaches to the preparation of teachers of young children have been proposed. During the past decade, several national studies such as A NATION PREPARED,TEACHERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY, published in 1986 by the Educational Forum of the Carnegie Corporation have communicated to public officials and to professionals the critical relationship of excellent teaching of young children during their early years to later success in school and in life experiences outside these school years.[2] Another national study, A NATION AT RISK:THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATION REFORM, pointed out the need to provide prospective teachers a sound liberal arts background first, followed by professional preparation courses as a "wrap-around" curriculum rather than an education major.[3] In the state of North Carolina, the State Board of Education has stressed the importance of liberally educated students entering teacher preparation programs that enable them to collaborate with master teachers in field, arts and sciences professors as well as education professors in clinical settings. Further, the National Governor's Association has set as one if its agenda items for the 1990's the issue of improving teacher preparation in its national report, RESTRUCTURING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM; AGENDA FOR THE 1990'S.[4] Attention, then, has obviously been called to the need for outstanding teachers of young children, but few teacher preparation institutions have performed even minor surgery on traditional programs or constructed new programs to demonstrate viable ways of responsing to this documented need.

Duke University's Innovative Elementary Teacher Certification Program was designed to address the dual issues of (1) the need for competent teachers of young children and (2) the need for a new approach to the preparation of teachers of young children in a non-traditional way.

WHAT--is the program about?

The North Carolina State Board of Education has included in their approved routes for certification an "innovative route." Specifically, this route encourages teacher preparation institutions to

design programs that meet teacher preparation guidelines in less traditional ways. The Duke Elementary Certification Program is the first teacher preparation program to be approved by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction to offer teacher certification under the Innovative Program Certificate Route. The Duke Program is unique in the state of North Carolina in four major ways.

First, the program was planned in collaboration with representatives of the Department of Public Instruction, a local school system, and faculty of the Education Program at Duke. The concepts and ideas of the program reflect a shared dedication to the preparation of teachers of young children cogent with sound principles of child development. The Duke Program, due to its collaborative nature, did not follow the old "send and tell" method in the student teaching internship--"send out" student teachers and then "tell" classroom supervising teachers what was to be done. Instead, the school principal and supervising teachers, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, and the elementary supervisor all had direct imput into planning the student teaching experience, the schedule, the method of evaluation, and a myriad of other facets of the entire experience.

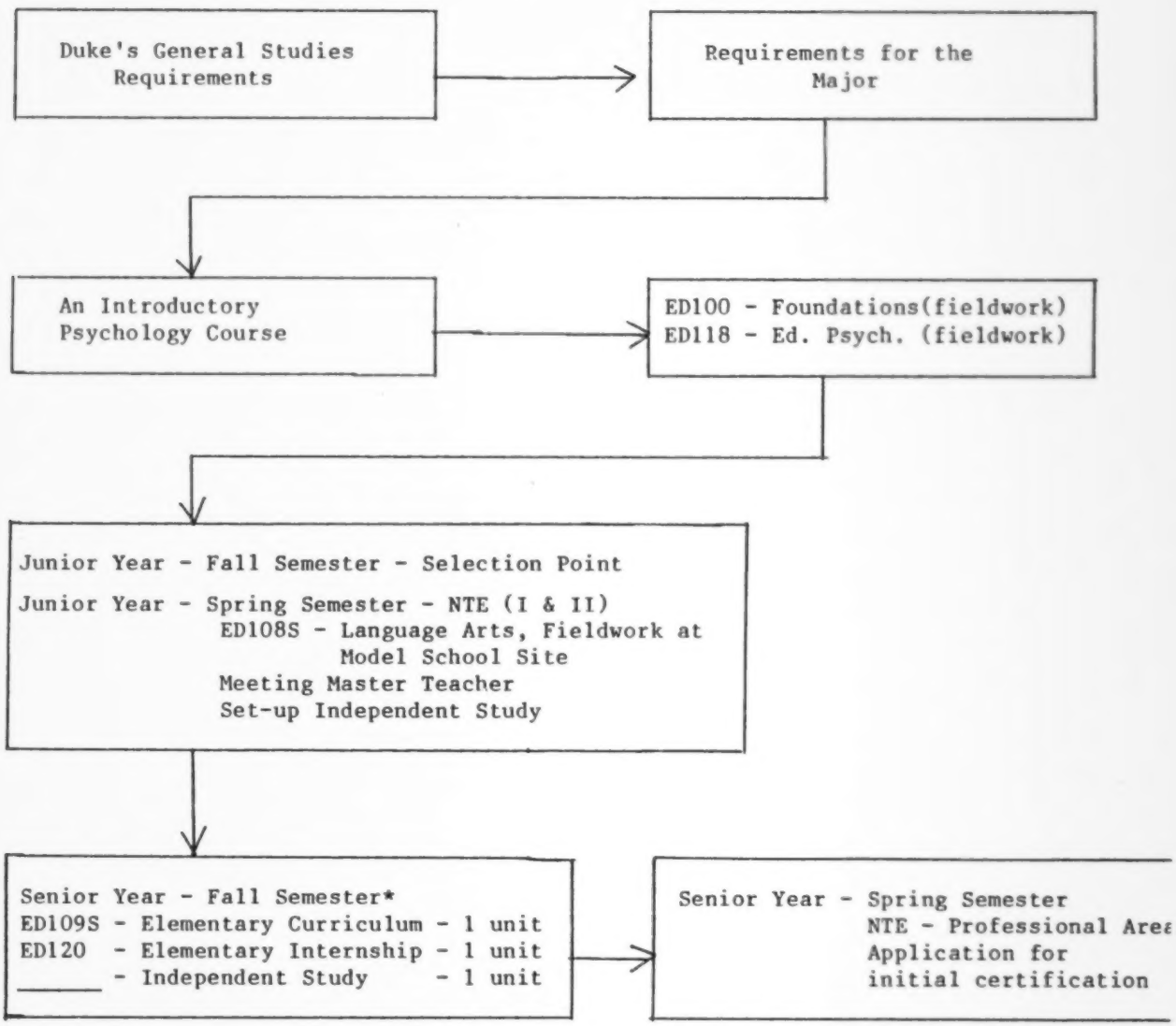
Second, the program is unique for its intensive semester of internship in a model school setting designed along the medical or clinical training model. The program requires a total sequence of six courses, plus one prerequisite. (See Figure #1) Three of these courses are to be completed prior to the senior year. The three remaining courses form the intensive laboratory experience in the model school to be taken in the fall semester of the senior year.

For one semester in the fall of the senior year, student interns are immersed in the laboratory of a public school classroom under the collaborative direction of a master teacher and a university supervisor, participating concurrently in a university seminar designed to provide theory and research as well as a problem-solving arena for the internship experiences. The internship is designed to provide a wider range of intensive laboratory experiences for undergraduate students on a one-to-one basis than is possible within a traditional teacher training program.

The internship begins in the pre-service days, before the

Figure #1

Duke University Education Program
PATH TO ELEMENTARY TEACHER CERTIFICATION


Duke's General Studies Requirements
Requirements for the Major
An Introductory Psychology Course
ED100 - Foundations(fieldwork)
ED118 - Ed. Psych. (fieldwork)
Junior Year - Fall Semester - Selection Point
Junior Year - Spring Semester - NTE (I & II)
ED108S - Language Arts, Fieldwork at Model School Site
Meeting Master Teacher
Set-up Independent Study
Senior Year - Fall Semester*
ED109S - Elementary Curriculum - 1 unit
ED120 - Elementary Internship - 1 unit
_____ - Independent Study - 1 unit
Senior Year - Spring Semester
NTE - Professional Area
Application for initial certification

* During this period, the entire semester is devoted to student teaching, beginning in teacher pre-service days, the week of freshman arrival.

children arrive for the first day of school, providing student interns the chance to learn how to set up a classroom and to experience all of the necessary "getting ready for school" activities. Upon completion of this 16- week internship semester, and upon graduation , the intern is eligible for teacher certification as a teacher in kindergarten through grade 6, graduating with a non-education major in a liberal arts discipline.

In contrast to traditional teacher training programs which concentrate on a series of methods coourses taught on the university campus by professors often far removed from actual classroom practice, the Duke Program utilizes the expertise of master teachers in-field to address the teaching competencies required by the state. The state of North Carolina uses a competency-based program for ensuring that prospective teachers of young children have an opportunity to learn the skills essential for successful teaching in a kindergarten through grade 6 classroom. These competencies are contained within Nine General Guidelines containing the essential curricular areas for the K-6 classroom. The master teachers, principal and Director of the Duke Program review each of these nine guidelines and their related competencies to ensure their completion in the internship semester. However, due to the individuality and expertise of the master teachers, competencies are met in different ways in each classroom. For example, a field trip to the university greenhouse and related pre- and pose-trip activities met certain specific science competencies in one first grade classroom. In another room, a unit plan on plants, including a garden, cooking, art, and writing activities met the same competencies.

A third major difference in the Duke program is that concurrent with the internship semester, interns participate in a Curriculum Seminar on campus with a professor who is especially trained in early childhood curriculum and who is a participant with the master teachers in the laboratory setting of the school.

A fourth difference is the opportunity to conduct research on a special topic of interest with a professor of one's choice provided in an Independent Study Unit requirement during the professional semester. For example, research topics in the independent studies have been related to bilingual education, child development, giftedness, social

interaction, and the emotionally disturbed. The topic may be related to the intern's major, or not, depending on the choice of the intern.

The purpose of the independent study unit requirement is to encourage interns to look beyond the confines of the classroom walls, to encourage them to ask questions about what they are experiencing in the classroom, probe research and theory for answers, and apply their knowledge to actual classroom practice.

WHO-are involved in the Program?

University Participants - Duke's Innovative Elementary Certification Program is conducted by Duke's Program in Education and funded by the Trinity College of Arts and Sciences. The program staff consists of a Director/Student Teacher Supervisor, a professor who teacher the curriculum course, and a language arts instructor. Other members of the faculty in the Program in Education teach the pre-requisite courses.

Students - Due to the intensive one-to-one nature of the internship semester, only a small group of qualified Duke students can participate in the program. The program is selective, admitting a maximum group of ten students per year. Students may apply to the Selection Committee at any time after declaration of major, and notification of final acceptance is made prior to the spring semester of the junior year.

All interested students complete an application and are interviewed by the Selection Committee composed of professors in a ciscipline, master teachers, current student interns, and school principal. A balance of characteristics such as academic achievement, sex, ethnic membership, and successful experience with young children are the goals for selection of the group of interns.

A pilot group of six students was selected for the fall semester of 1988. The second year had a group of seven interns and the 1990-91 group has nine interns.

Master Teachers - The master teachers are critical to the Duke Program, in that they are responsible for delivering many of the teaching competencies, previously taught in methods courses. The master teachers are called on to plan, conduct, evaluate and refine the internship after each annual evaluation. For their involvement, each

master teacher receives a $1,000 stipend from the University.

The cadre of master teachers chosen to participate in the Duke Program have been selected to participate on the basis of their meeting specific criteria. Each teacher has a minimum of five years teaching experience as well as professional recognition of excellent in teaching. All master teachers have also participated in state and county workshops on mentoring as well as have had previous experience supervising student teachers. Final selection of master teachers is made by a Selection Committee composed of the school system Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Director of Student Teaching, the Elementary School Specialist assigned to the model school, and the model school principal.

WHERE--is the program conducted?

The Duke Program is conducted at a model school, Parkwood Elementary School, located in the Research Triangle Park, Durham, North Carolina. This public school was chosen as the model school site because of the high calibre of its educational programs, teaching staff, and school principal. As the model school site, Parkwood was chosen because it offers Duke interns a broad range of educational experiences in its school population, made up of many different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. Parkwood was also chosen because it could provide Duke interns a multitude of educational programs including as examples, programs for the severely and profoundly mentally retarded, the gifted and talented, English as a second language, and the use of computers in every classroom.

Currently, the program is at capacity in the model school site. Further expansion of the program would be in the form of program duplication an another public school site.

WHEN--a rhetorical question?

The answer to the question "when" appears to have been answered already. When does the Duke program operate? Quite simply, during the academic year. But there is far more to the question than appears on the surface.

I would ask the reader to indulge this writer here as I attempt to answer a more far reaching "when" question here. "When will we begin in teacher preparation programs to fully utilize the vast

resource of expertise we have in our classroom teachers?"

As Director of the Duke Program and Supervisor of Student Teachers, I am in the classroom at least four days a week, observing each of the student interns once a week. During this process of observation in the past two program years, I have never ceased to be amazed at the amount of growth each intern experiences under the tutelage of the master teacher. Having been part of Duke's previous, more traditional elementary major teacher preparation program, I have the benefit of experiencing both a traditional and non-traditional program. Having master teacher collaborate in the planning, design, evaluation, and continued "fine-tuning" of our Program has resulted in far richer, more exciting experiences for student interns than we had before in our more traditional program. By their strong sense of ownership in the program, master teachers have continued to find ways to improve the internship experience, make it more relevant, and involve interns in the teaching of young children at a higher degree of intensity than in our previous traditional program.

From the past two years' experience in our program, it is quite obvious that master teachers are a veritable treasure trove of expertise in the preparation of teachers of young children. We have just begun to tap this resource!

SO WHAT--does this have to do with the REAL WORLD?

The Duke Program is obviously a small, selective program. We do not produce hundreds of teachers each year, but a handful of ten. So what does this program have to offer the "real world" of larger-sized teacher preparation institutions? The following points present some of the factors that I feel are worthy of further consideration for other teacher preparation programs:

Collaboration - Active involvement between the teacher preparation institution, principals, and master teachers in planning, conducting , and evaluating the teacher preparaion program.

Use of Resources - Utilizing expertise of master teachers in field experiences in place of traditional methods courses.

Selectivity - Choosing teachers who have demonstrated outstanding competence as teachers of young children and rewarding them with a teaching stipend. Choosing students who show promise as teachers

of young children, allowing them an intensive one-to-one experience with a master teacher.

Time/Length of Internship - Planning an internship to include pre-service days, as well as an entire full semester in the teaching experience.

CONCLUSION

The Duke Elementary Certification Program is a small, yet significant step toward the improvement of teacher education in a manner that is intensive, innovative, and collaborative. Using this design, other small programs may find it possible to become involved in the preparation of teachers of young children. Larger programs may find the model suitable to an "Honors Program" for especially qualified teacher candidates. We begin our third program year excited about all the possibilities present in a situation involving young children, eager student interns, and master teachers--all collaborating in the learning experience.

FOOTNOTES

[2]Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, (May, 1986), A NATION PREPARED: TEACHERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY, Report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Forum).

[3]National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). A NATION AT RISK: THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATION REFORM. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.

[4]National Governors Association (January, 1988), RESTRUCTURING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: AGENDA FOR THE 1990'S, Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association.

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